APPENDIX I

THE RIDDLE OF RAMA AND KRISHNA

Rama is the hero of the Ramayana whose author is Valmiki. The story of the Ramayana is a very short one. Besides it is simple and in itself there is nothing sensational about it.

Rama is the son of Dasharatha the king of Ayodhya the modern Benares. Dasharatha had three wives, Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra besides several hundred concubines. Kaikeyi had married Dasharatha on terms which were at the time of marriage unspecified and which Dasharatha was bound to fulfil whenever he was called upon by Kaikeyi to do so. Dasharatha was childless for a long time. An heir to the throne was ardently desired by him. Seeing that there was no hope of his begetting a son on any of his three wives he decided to perform a Putreshti Yajna and called the sage Shrung at the sacrifice who prepared pindas and gave the three wives of Dasharatha to eat them. After they ate the pindas three wives became pregnant and gave birth to sons. Kausalya gave birth to Rama, Kaikeyi gave birth to Bharata and Sumitra gave birth to two sons Laxman and Satrughana. In due course Rama was married to Sita. When Rama came of age, Dasharatha thought of resigning the throne in favour of Rama and retiring from kingship. While this was being settled Kaikeyi raised the question of rendering her satisfaction of the terms on which she had married Dasharatha. On being asked to state her terms she demanded that her son Bharata should be installed on the throne in preference to Rama and Rama should live in forest for 12 years. Dasharatha with great reluctance agreed. Bharata became king of Ayodhya and Rama accompanied by his wife Sita and his step brother Laxman went to live in the forest. While the three living in the forest Ravana the king of Lanka kidnapped Sita and took her away and kept her in his palace

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This is a 49-page typed copy placed in a well-bound file along with the MS of 'Symbols of Hinduism'. This riddle does not find place in the original Table of Contents. Hence this is included as an Appendix to this part.—Ed.

Note: Government does not concur with the views expressed in this Chapter.

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intending to make her one of his wives. Rama and Laxman then started search of Sita. On the way they meet Sugriva and Hanuman two leading personages of the Vanara (monkey) race and form friendship with them. With their help the place of the abduction was located and with their help they marched on Lanka, defeated Ravana in the battle and rescued Sita. Rama returns with Laxman and Sita to Ayodhya. By that time twelve years had elapsed and the term prescribed by Kaikeyi was fulfilled with the result that Bharata gave up the throne and in his place Rama became the king of Ayodhya.

Such is in brief the outline of the story of the Ramayana as told by Valmiki.

There is nothing in this story to make Rama the object of worship. He is only a dutiful son. But Valmiki saw something extraordinary in Rama and that is why he undertook to compose the Ramayana. Valmiki asked Narada the following question[1] :

> "Tell me Oh ! Narada, who is the most accomplished man on earth at the present time ?"

and then goes on to elaborate what he means by accomplished man. He defines his accomplished man as :

> "Powerful, one who knows the secret of religion, one who knows gratitude, truthful, one who is ready to sacrifice his self interest even when in distress to fulfil a religious vow, virtuous in his conduct, eager to safeguard the interests of all, strong pleasing in appearance with power of self-control, able to subdue anger, illustrious, with no jealousy for the prosperity of others, and in war able to strike terror in the hearts of Gods."

Narada then asks for time to consider and after mature deliberation tells him that the only person who can be said to possess these virtues is Rama, the son of Dasharatha.

It is because of his virtues that Rama has come to be deified.

But is Rama a worthy personality of deification ? Let those who accept him an object worthy of worship as a God consider the following facts.

Rama's birth is miraculous and it may be that the suggestion that he was born from a pinda prepared by the sage Shrung is an allegorical glass to cover the naked truth that he was begotten upon Kausalya by the sage Shrung although the two did not stand in the relationship of husband and wife. In any case his birth if not disreputable in its origin is certainly unnatural.

There are other incidents connected with the birth of Rama the unsavory character of which it will be difficult to deny.

[1] Balakanda Sarga I. slokas 1-5.

Valmiki starts his Ramayana by emphasizing the fact that Rama is an Avatar of Vishnu and it is Vishnu who agreed to take birth as Rama and be the son of Dasharatha. The God Brahma came to know of this and felt that in order that this Rama Avatar of Vishnu be a complete success arrangement shall be made that Rama shall have powerful associates to help him and cooperate with him. There were none such existing then.

The Gods agreed to carry out the command of Brahma and engaged themselves in wholesale acts of fornication not only against Apsaras who were prostitutes not only against the unmarried daughters of Yakshas and Nagas but also against the lawfully wedded wives of Ruksha, Vidhyadhar, Gandharvas, Kinnars and Vanaras and produced the Vanaras who became the associates of Rama.

Rama's birth is thus accompanied by general debauchery if not in his case certainly in the case of his associates. His marriage to Sita is not above comment. According to Buddha Ramayana, Sita was the sister of Rama, both were the children of Dasharatha. The Ramayana of Valmiki does not agree with the relationship mentioned in Buddha Ramayana. According to Valmiki Sita was the daughter of the king Janaka of Videha and therefore not a sister of Rama. This is not convincing for even according to Valmiki she is not the natural born daughter of Janaka but a child found by a farmer in his field while ploughing it and presented by him to king Janaka and brought up by Janaka. It was therefore in a superficial sense that Sita could be said to be the daughter of Janaka. The story in the Buddha Ramayana is natural and not inconsistent with the Aryan rules[1] of marriage. If the story is true, then Rama's marriage to Sita is no ideal to be copied. In another sense Rama's marriage was not an ideal marriage which could be copied. One of the virtues ascribed to Rama is that he was monogamous. It is difficult to understand how such a notion could have become common. For it has no foundation in fact. Even Valmiki refers[2] to the many wives of Rama. These were of course in addition to his many concubines. In this he was the true son of his nominal father Dasharatha who had not only the three wives referred to above but many others.

Let us next consider his character as an individual and as a king.

In speaking of him as an individual I will refer to only two incidents one relating to his treatment of Vali and other relating to his treatment of his own wife Sita. First let us consider the incident of Vali.

[1] Among the Aryans marriages between brothers and sisters were allowed.

[2] Ayodhyakanda Sarga VIII sloka 12.

Vali and Sugriva were two brothers. They belonged to the Vanar race and came from a ruling family which had its own kingdom the capital of which was Kishkindha. At the time when Sita was kidnapped by Ravana, Vali was reigning at Kishkindha. While Vali was on the throne he was engaged in a war with a Rakshasa by name Mayavi. In the personal combat between the two Mayavi ran for his life. Both Vali and Sugriva pursued him. Mayavi entered into a deep cavity in the earth, Vali asked Sugriva to wait at the mouth of the cavity and himself went inside. After sometime a flood of blood came from inside the cavity. Sugriva concluded that Vali must have been killed by Mayavi and came to Kishkindha and got himself declared king in place of Vali and made Hanuman his Prime Minister.

As a matter of fact, Vali was not killed. It was Mayavi who was killed by Vali. Vali came out of the cavity but did not find Sugriva there. He proceeded to Kishkindha and to his great surprise he found that Sugriva had proclaimed himself king. Vali naturally became enraged at this act of treachery on the part of his brother Sugriva and he had good ground to be. Sugriva should have ascertained, should not merely have assumed that Vali was dead. Secondly Vali had a son by name Angad whom Sugriva should have made the king as the legitimate heir of Vali. He did neither of the two things. His was a clear case of usurpation. Vali drove out Sugriva and took back the throne. The two brothers became mortal enemies.

This occurred just after Ravana had kidnapped Sita. Rama and Laxman were wandering in search of her. Sugriva and Hanuman were wandering in search of friends who could help them to regain the throne from Vali. The two parties met quite accidentally. After informing each other of their difficulties a compact was arrived at between the two. It was agreed that Rama should help Sugriva to kill Vali and to establish him on the throne of Kishkindha. On the part of Sugriva and Hanuman it was agreed that they should help Rama to regain Sita. To enable Rama to fulfil his part of the compact it was planned that Sugriva should wear a garland in his neck as to be easily distinguishable to Rama from Vali and that while the dual was going on Rama should conceal himself behind a tree and then shoot an arrow at Vali and kill him. Accordingly a dual was arranged, Sugriva with a garland in his neck and while the daul was on, Rama standing behind a tree shot Vali with his arrow and opened the way to Sugriva to be the king of Kishkindha. This murder of Vali is the greatest blot on the character of Rama. It was a crime which was thoroughly unprovoked, for Vali had no quarrel with Rama. It was most cowardly act for Vali was unarmed. It was a planned and premeditated murder.

Consider his treatment of his own wife Sita. With the army collected for him by Sugriva and Hanuman, Rama invades Lanka. There too he plays the same mean part as he did as between the two brothers Vali and Sugriva. He takes the help of Bibhishana the brother of Ravana promising him to kill Ravana and his son and place him on the vacant throne. Rama kills Ravana and also his son Indrajit. The first thing Rama does after the close of the fight is to give a decent burial to the dead body of Ravana. Thereafter he interests himself in the coronation of Bibhishana and it is after the coronation is over that he sends Hanuman to Sita and that took to inform her that he, Laxman and Sugriva are hale and hearty and that they have killed Ravana.

The first thing he should have done after disposing of Ravana was to have gone to Sita. He does not do so. He finds more interest in the coronation than in Sita. Even when the coronation is over he does not go himself but sends Hanuman. And what is the message he sends ? He does not ask Hanuman to bring her. He asks him to inform her that he is hale and hearty. It is Sita who expresses to Hanuman her desire to see Rama, Rama does not go to Sita his own wife who was kidnapped and confined by Ravana for more than 10 months. Sita is brought to him and what does Rama say to Sita when he sees her ? It would be difficult to believe any man with ordinary human kindness could address to his wife in such dire distress as Rama did to Sita when he met her in Lanka if there was not the direct authority of Valmiki. This is how Rama addressed her[1] :

> "I have got you as a prize in a war after conquering my enemy your captor. I have recovered my honour and punished my enemy. People have witnessed my military prowess and I am glad my labours have been rewarded. I came here to kill Ravana and wash off the dishonour. I did not take this trouble for your sake."

Could there be anything more cruel than this conduct of Rama towards Sita ? He does not stop there. He proceeded to tell her :

> "I suspect your conduct. You must have been spoiled by Ravana. Your very sight is revolting to me. On you daughter of Janaka, I allow you to go anywhere you like. I have nothing to do with you. I conquerred you back and I am content for that was my object. I cannot think that Ravana would have failed to enjoy a woman as beautiful as you are."

Quite naturally Sita calls Rama low and mean and tells him quite plainly that she would have committed suicide and saved him all this trouble if when Hanuman first came he had sent her a message that he had abandoned her on the ground that she was kidnapped. To, give

[1] Yudhakanda Sarga II5 slokas 1-23.

him no excuse Sita undertakes to prove her purity. She enters the fire and comes out unscathed. The Gods satisfied with this evidence proclaim that she is pure. It is then that Rama agrees to take her back to Ayodhya.

And what does he do with her when he brings her back to Ayodhya. Of course, he became king and she became queen. But while Rama remained king, Sita ceased to be a queen very soon. This incident reflects great infamy upon Rama. It is recorded by Valmiki in his Ramayana that some days after the coronation of Rama and Sita as king and queen Sita conceived. Seeing that she was carrying some residents of evil disposition began to calumniate Sita suggesting that she must have conceived from Ravana while she was in Lanka and blaming Rama for taking such a woman back as his wife. This malicious gossip in the town was reported by Bhadra, the Court joker to Rama. Rama evidently was stung by this calumny. He was overwhelmed with a sense of disgrace. This is quite natural. What is quite unnatural is the means he adopts of getting rid of this disgrace. To get rid of this disgrace he takes the shortest cut and the swiftest means—namely to abandon her, a woman in a somewhat advanced state of pregnancy in a jungle, without friends, without provision, without even notice in a most treacherous manner. There is no doubt that the idea of abandoning Sita was not sudden and had not occurred to Rama on the spur of the moment. The genesis of the idea the developing of it and the plan of executing are worth some detailed mention. When Bhadra reports to him the gossip about Sita which had spread in the town Rama calls his brothers and tells them his feelings. He tells them Sita's purity and chastity was proved in Lanka, that Gods had vouched for it and that he absolutely believed in her innocence, purity and chastity. "All the same the public are calumniating Sita and are blaming me and putting me to shame. No one can tolerate such disgrace. Honour is a great asset, Gods as well as great men strive to maintain it in tact. I cannot bear this dishonour and disgrace. To save myself from such dishonour and disgrace I shall be ready even to abandon you. Don't think I shall hesitate to abandon Sita."

This shows that he had made up his mind to abandon Sita as the easiest way of saving himself from public calumny without waiting to consider whether the way was fair or foul. The life of Sita simply did not count. What counted was his own personal name and fame. He of course does not take the manly course of stopping this gossip, which as a king he could do and which as a husband who was convinced of his wife's innocence he was bound to it. He yielded to the public gossip

and there are not wanting Hindus who use this as ground to prove that Rama was a democratic king when others could equally well say that he was a weak and cowardly monarch : Be that as it may that diabolical plan of saving his name and his fame he discloses to his brothers but not to Sita the only person who was affected by it and the only person who was entitled to have notice of it. But she is kept entirely in the dark. Rama keeps it away from Sita as a closely guarded secret and was waiting for an opportunity to put his plan into action. Eventually the cruel fate of Sita gives him the opportunity he was waiting for. Women who are carrying exhibit all sorts of cravings for all sorts of things. Rama knew of this. So one day he asked Sita if there was anything for which she felt a craving. She said yes. Rama said what was it. She replied that she would like to live in the vicinity of the Ashrama of sage on the bank of the river Ganges and live on fruits and roots at least for one night. Rama simply jumped at the suggestion of Sita and said "Be easy my dear I shall see that you are sent there tomorrow". Sita treats this as an honest promise by a loving husband. But what does Rama do ? He thinks it is a good opportunity for carrying through his plan of abandoning Sita. Accordingly he called his brothers to a secret conference and disclosed to them his determination to use this desire of Sita as an opportunity to carry out his plan of abandonment of Sita. He tells his brothers not to intercede on behalf of Sita, and warns them that if they came in his way he would look upon them as his enemies. Then he tells Laxman to take Sita in a chariot next day to the Ashram in the jungle on the bank of the river Ganges and to abandon her there. Laxman did not know how he could muster courage to tell Sita what was decided about Sita by Rama. Sensing his difficulty Rama informs Laxman that Sita had already expressed her desire to spend some time in the vicinity of an Ashrama on the bank of the river and eased the mind of Laxman. This confabulation took place at night. Next morning Laxman asked Sumanta to yoke the horses to the chariot. Sumanta informs Laxman of his having done so. Laxman then goes into the palace and meets Sita and reminds her of her having expressed her desire to pass some days in the vicinity of an Ashrama and Rama having promised to fulfil the same and tells her of his having been charged by Rama to do the needful in the matter. He points to her the chariot waiting there and says 'let us go!' Sita jumps into the chariot with her heart full of gratitude to Rama. With Laxman as her companion and Sumanta as coachman the chariot proceeds to its appointed place. At last they were on the bank of the Ganges and were ferried across by the fishermen. Laxman fell at Sita's feet, and with hot tears issuing

from his eyes he said 'Pardon me, O, blameless queen, for what I am doing. My orders are to abandon you here, for the people blame Rama for keeping you in his house."

Sita abandoned by Rama and left to die in a jungle went for shelter in the Ashrama of Valmiki which was near about. Valmiki gave her protection and kept her in his Ashram. There in course of time Sita gave birth to twin sons, called Kusa and Lava. The three lived with Valmiki. Valmiki brought up the boys and taught them to sing the Ramayana which he had composed. For 12 years the boys lived in the forest in the Ashrama of Valmiki not far from Ayodhya where Rama continued to rule. Never once in those 12 years this model husband and loving father cared to inquire what had happened to Sita whether she was living or whether she was dead. Twelve years after Rama meets Sita in a strange manner. Rama decided to perform a Yadna and issued invitation to all the Rishis to attend and take part. For reasons best known to Rama himself no invitation was issued to Valmiki although his Ashram was near to Ayodhya. But Valmiki came to the Yadna of his own accord accompanied by the two sons of Sita introducing them as his disciples. While the Yadna was going on the two boys used to perform recitations of Ramayana in the presence of the Assembly. Rama was very pleased and made inquiries when he was informed that they were the sons of Sita. It was then he remembered Sita and what does he do then ? He does not send for Sita. He calls these innocent boys who knew nothing about their parents' sin, who were the only victims of a cruel destiny to tell Valmiki that if Sita was pure and chaste she could present herself in the Assembly to take a vow thereby remove the calumny cast against herself and himself. This is a thing she had once done in Lanka. This is a thing she could have been asked to do again before she was sent away. There was no promise that after this vindication of her character Rama was prepared to take her back. Valmiki brings her to the Assembly. When she was in front of Rama, Valmiki said, 'O, son of Dasharatha, here is Sita whom you abandoned in consequence of public disapprobation. She will now swear her purity if permitted by you. Here are your twin-born sons bred up by me in my hermitage.' 'I know,' said Rama 'that Sita is pure and that these are my sons. She performed an ordeal in Lanka in proof of her purity and therefore I took her back. But people here have doubts still and let Sita perform an ordeal here that all these Rishis and people may witness it."

With eyes cast down on the ground and with hands folded Sita swore "As I never thought of any man except Rama even in my mind, let mother Earth open and bury me. As I always loved Rama in words,

in thoughts, and in deed, let mother Earth open and bury me ! As she uttered the oath, the earth verily opened and Sita was carried away inside seated on a golden *simhasana* (throne). Heavenly flowers fell on Sita's head while the audience looked on as in a trance.

That means that Sita preferred to die rather than return to Rama who had behaved no better than a brute.

Such is the tragedy of Sita and the crime of Rama the God.

Let me throw some search light on Rama the King.

Rama is held out as an ideal King. But can that conclusion be said to be founded in fact ?

As a matter of fact Rama never functions, as a King. He was a nominal King. The administration as Valmiki states were entrusted to Bharata his brother. He had freed himself from the cares and worries about his kingdom and his subjects. Valmiki has very minutely described[1] the daily life of Rama after he became King. According to that account the day was divided into two parts. Up to forenoon and afternoon. From morning to forenoon he was engaged in performing religious rites and ceremonies and offering devotion. The afternoon he spent alternately in the company of Court jesters and in the Zenana. When he got tired of the Zenana he joined the company of jesters and when he got tired of jesters he went back to the Zenana[2]. Valmiki also gives a detailed description of how Rama spent his life in the Zenana. This Zenana was housed in a park called Ashoka Vana. There Rama used to take his meal. The food according to Valmiki consisted of all kinds of delicious viands. They included flesh and fruits and liquor. Rama was not a teetotaller. He drank liquor copiously and Valmiki records that Rama saw to it that Sita joined with him in his drinking bouts[3]. From the description of the Zenana of Rama as given by Valmiki it was by no means a mean thing. There were Apsaras, Uraga and Kinnari accomplished in dancing and singing. There were other beautiful women brought from different parts. Rama sat in the midst of these women drinking and dancing. They pleased Rama and Rama garlanded them. Valmiki calls Rama as a 'Prince among women's men'. This was not a day's affair. It was a regular course of his life.

As has already been said Rama never attended to public business. He never observed the ancient rule of Indian kings of hearing the wrongs of his subjects and attempting to redress them. Only one occasion has been recorded by Valmiki when he personally heard the grievance of his subjects. But unfortunately the occasion turned out to be a tragic one. He took upon himself to redress the wrong but. in

[1] Uttara Kanda Sarga 42 sloka 27.

[2] Uttara Kanda Sarga 43 sloka 1.

[2] *Ibid.,* Sarga 42 sloka 8.

doing so committed the worst crime that history has ever recorded. The incident is known as the murder of Sambuka the Shudra. It is said by Valmiki that in Rama's reign there were no premature deaths in his kingdom. It happened, however, that a certain Brahman's son died in a premature death. The bereaved father carried his body to the gate of the king's palace, and placing it there, cried aloud and bitterly reproached Rama for the death of his son, saying that it must be the consequence of some sin committed within his realm, and that the king himself was guilty if he did not punish it; and finally threatened to end his life there by sitting *dharna* (hunger-strike) against Rama unless his son was restored to life. Rama thereupon consulted his council of eight learned Rishis and Narada amongst them told Rama that some Shudra among his subjects must have been performing Tapasya (ascetic exercises), and thereby going against Dharma (sacred law); for according to it the practice of Tapasya was proper to the twice-born alone, while the duty of the Shudras consisted only in the service of the twice-born. Rama was thus convinced that it was the sin committed by a Shudra in transgressing Dharma in that manner, which was responsible for the death of the Brahmin boy. So, Rama mounted his aerial car and scoured the countryside for the culprit. At last, in a wild region far away to the south he espied a man practising rigorous austerities of a certain kind. He approached the man, and with no more ado than to enquire of him and inform himself that he was a Shudra, by name Sambuka who was practising Tapasya with a view to going to heaven in his own earthly person and without so much as a warning, expostulation or the like addressed to him, cut off his head. And lo and behold ! that very moment the dead Brahman boy in distant Ayodhya began to breathe again. Here in the wilds the Gods rained flowers on the king from their joy at his having prevented a Shudra from gaining admission to their celestial abode through the power of the Tapasya which he had no right to perform. They also appeared before Rama and congratulated him on his deed. In answer to his prayer to them to revive the dead Brahman boy lying at the palace gate in Ayodhya, they informed him that he had already come to life. They then departed. Rama thence proceeded to the Ashrama which was nearby of the sage Agastya, who commended the step he had taken with Sambuka, and presented him with a divine bracelet. Rama then returned to his capital.

Such is Rama.

II

Now about. Krishna.

He is the hero of the Mahabharata. Really speaking the Mahabharata is principally connected with the Kauravas and the Pandavas. It is the story of the war fought by the two for right to the kingdom which belonged to their ancestors. They should be the principal characters. But they are not. It is Krishna who is the hero of the epic. This is a little strange thing. But what is stranger still is the possibility not being a contemporary of the Kauravas and Pandavas. Krishna was the friend of the Pandavas who had their empire. Krishna was the enemy of Kansa who also had his empire. It does not seem possible that two such empires should subsist side by side at once and at the same time. Secondly, in the Mahabharata there is nothing to show that there was any intercourse between the two empires. The two stories of Krishna and the Pandavas have been mixed together at some later date in order to provide Krishna with a larger theater to play a bigger part. The mixture of the two stories is the result of a deliberate design on the part of Vyas to glorify Krishna and to raise him above all.

In the hands of Vyas Krishna is God among men. That is why he is made the hero of the Mahabharata. Does Krishna really deserve to be called God among men ? A short sketch of his life alone will help to give a correct answer. Krishna was born at Mathura at midnight on the 8th day of the month of Bhadra. His father was Vasudeva of the Yadu race, and his mother Devaki, daughter of Devaka, the brother of Ugrasen, king of Mathura. Ugrasen's wife had an illicit connection with Drumila the Danava king of Saubha. From this illicit connection was born Kansa who was in a sense the cousin of Devaki. Kansa imprisoned Ugrasen and usurped the throne of Mathura. Having heard from Narada or *Daivavani,* a voice from Heaven that Devaki's eighth child would kill him, Kansa imprisoned both Devaki and her husband and killed six of their children as they were born one after another. The seventh child, Balarama, was miraculously transferred from Devaki's womb to that of Rohini, another wife of Vasudeva. When the eighth child, Krishna, was born, he was secretly borne by his father to the other side of the river Yamuna, where Nanda and his wife Yasoda, natives of Vraja, were then living. The Yamuna rolled back her waters to make way for the divine child, the Ananta, the chief of serpents protected him with his ample hood from the heavy torrent of rain that was then falling. By a previous arrangement, Vasudeva exchanged his son for Nanda's newly born daughter, Yogindra or Mahamaya, and

presented the latter to Kansa as his eighth child, but she flew away, telling him that the child which is being brought up by Nanda and Yasoda would kill him. This led Kansa to make a series of unsuccessful attempts to kill the child Krishna. With this object he sent to Vraja a number of Asuras in various forms. The killing of these Asuras and number of other heroic deeds, impossible for an ordinary human child, are the chief staple of the Puranic account of Krishna's early life. Some of them are mentioned in the Mahabharata also. As might be expected, the authorities differ largely in their narration of these facts. I mention only some of them, following chiefly the later authorities.

The first or one of the first of these is the killing of Putana. She was Kansa's nurse and was sent by him to kill Krishna in the form of a female vulture, according to Harivamsa, and of a beautiful woman according to the Bhagavata. As she pretending to suckle Krishna, put her poisoned breast into his mouth, he sucked it so powerfully as to draw out her very life-blood so that she fell down with an yell and died.

Krishna performed another of these feats when he was only three months old. It was the breaking of a *Sakata,* a cart which was used as a cupboard and had several jars and pans, full of milk and curd, ranged on it. According to the Harivamsa Sakata was an Asura sent by Kansa and had entered the cart intending to crush the infant Krishna by its weight. However, Yasoda had placed the boy under the cart and gone to bathe in the Yamuna. On her return she was told that he had kicked against it and broken it to pieces with all that lay on it. This event surprised and frightened Yasoda, and she offered pujas to avert the evils threatened by it.

When Putana and Sakata's attempts to kill Krishna having failed, Kansa sent another of his emissaries an asura named Trinavarta, to attempt the same task. He came in the form of a bird and carried aloft the divine child, then only a year old. But he soon dropped down dead with the child safe and holding his throat tightly.

The next feat was the breaking of two arjuna trees growing side by side. They are described as the bodies of two Yakshas who were converted into this form by a curse, and who were released by this feat of Krishna. When he had learnt to crawl about and could hardly be kept out of mischief Yasoda tied him with a rope to a wooden mortar and went to mind her household duties. When she was out of sight, Krishna began to drag the mortar after him till it stuck fast between the trees. Still pulling the heavy weight after him, he uprooted the trees and made them fall down with a tremendous noise, himself remaining unhurt by them.

Now these events filled Nanda with fear, and he seriously thought of leaving Vraja and moving to another settlement. While he was thus thinking, the place was infested with wolves which made great havoc among the cattle and made it quite unsafe. This fixed the wavering intention of the nomads and they moved with all their belongings to the pleasant woodland named Vrindavan. Krishna was then only seven years old.

After his removal to this new settlement, Krishna killed quite a large number of Asuras. One of them was Aristha, who came in the form of a bull; another, Kesin, who was disguised as a horse. Five others, Vratrasura, Bakasura, Aghasura, Bhomasura and Sankhasura, the last a Yaksha. More important than these was Kaliya, a snake chief, who lived with his family in a whirlpool of the Yamuna and thus poisoned its water. Krishna one day threw himself on Kaliya's hood and danced so wildly as to make him vomit blood. He would thus have killed him, but on the intervention of the snake's family, he spared him and allowed him to move away to another abode.

The subjugation of Kaliya was followed by Vastra-harana, the carrying away of clothes, a hard nut to crack for worshippers and admirers of the Puranic Krishna. The whole narration is so obscene, that even the merest outlines will, I fear, be felt to be indelicate. But I must give them in as decent a form as is possible, to make my brief account of Krishna's doings as full as I can. Some Gopies had dived into the waters of the Yamuna for a bath, leaving their clothes on the banks, as is said to be still the custom in some parts of the country. Krishna seized the clothes and with them climbed upon a tree on the riverside. When asked to return them, he refused to do so unless the women approached the tree and each begged her own dress for herself. This they could do only by coming naked out of the water and presenting themselves naked before Krishna. When they did this, Krishna was pleased and he gave them their clothes. This story is found in the Bhagavata.

The next of Krishna's feats was the uplifting of the Govardhan Hill. The Gopas were about to celebrate their annual sacrifices to Indra, the God of rain, and began to make grand preparations for it. Krishna pointed out to them that as they were a pastoral and not an agricultural tribe, their real Gods were kine, hills and woods, and them only they should worship, and not such Gods as the rain-giving Indra. The Gopas were convinced, and giving up their intention of worshipping Indra celebrated a grand sacrifice to the hill Govardhan, the nourisher of kine, accompanied with feasting and dancing. Indra was as he could not but be greatly enraged at this affront offered to him, and as

punishment, he poured rain on the Gopa settlement for seven days and nights continually. Krishna, nothing daunted, uprooted the hill and held it up as an umbrella over the settlement and thus protected the Gopas and their cattle from the ruinous effects of Indra's wrath. As to the jealousy between Indra and the Krishna of the Rig-Veda and that between the former and the Vishnu of the Satapatha Brahmana, I have already spoken in my first lecture.

Krishna's youthful career was full of illicit intimacy with the young women of Brindaben which is called his Rasalila. Rasa is a sort of circular dance in which the hands of the dancers, men and women, are joined together. It is said to be still prevalent among some of the wild tribes of this country. Krishna, it is stated, was in the habit of often enjoying this dance with the young Gopis of Brindaben, who loved him passionately. One of these dances is described in the Vishnu Purana, the Harivamsa and the Bhagavata. All these authorities interpret the Gopi's love for Krishna as piety—love to God, and see nothing wrong in their amorous dealings with him—dealings which, in the case of any other person, would be highly reprehensible according to their own admission. All agree as to the general character of the affair—the scene, the time and season, the drawing of the women with sweet music, the dance, the amorous feelings of the women for Krishna, and their expression in various ways. But while the Vishnu Purana tries— not always successfully—to keep within the limits of decency, the Harivamsa begins to be plainly indecent, and. the Bhagavata throws away all reserve and revels in indecency.

Of all his indecencies the worst is his illicit life with one Gopi by name Radha. Krishna's illicit relations with Radha are portrayed in the Brahmavaivarta Purana. Krishna is married to Rukmani the daughter of King Rukmangad. Radha was married to ..... . Krishna who abandons his lawfully wedded wife Rukmini and seduces Radha wife of another man and lives with her in sin without remorse.

Krishna was also a warrior and a politician even at a very early age, we are told, when he was in his twelfth year. Every one of his acts whether as a warrior or as a politician was an immoral act. His first act in this sphere was the assassination of his maternal uncle Kamsa. 'Assassination' is not too strong a term for it, for though Kamsa had given him provocation, he was not killed in the course of a battle or even in a single combat. The story is that having heard God Krishna's youthful feats at Brindaban, Kamsa got frightened and determined to secure his death by confronting him with a great athelete in an open exhibition of arms. Accordingly he announced the celebration of a *dhanuryajna* a bow sacrifice, and invited Krishna, Balarama and their

Gopa friends to it. Akrura, an adherent of Krishna, but an officer of Kamsa, was deputed by the latter to bring the brothers to Mathura. They came, determined to kill Kamsa. He had provoked not only them, but other Yadavas also, whom his persecution had compelled to leave Mathura. The brothers were therefore supported by a conspiracy against him. Having arrived at Mathura, they desired to change their simple Gopa dress for a more decent one, and asked for clothes from Kamsa's washerman, whom they met in the street. As the man behaved insolently with them, they killed him and took from his stock whatever clothes they liked. They then met Kubja, a hunch-backed woman who served as Kamsa's perfumer. At their request she annointed them with sandal paste and in return was cured by Krishna of her bodily deformity. The Bhagvata makes him visit her on a subsequent occasion and describes his union with her with its characteristic indecency. However, on the present occasion, the brothers annointed by Kubja and garlanded by Sudama, a flower-seller, entered the place of sacrifice and broke the great bow to which the sacrifice was to be offered. The frightened Kamsa sent an elephant named Kuvalayapida to kill them. Krishna killed the elephant and entered the arena. There the brothers encountered Kamsa's chosen athletes, Chanura, Mustika, Toshalaka and Andhra. Krishna killed Chanura and Toshalaka and Balarama the other two. Frustrated in his plan of securing Krishna's death by stratagem Kamsa ordered the brothers and their Gopa friends to be turned out and banished from his kingdom, their herds to be confiscated and Vasudeva, Nanda and his own father Ugrasen to be assassinated. At this Krishna got upon the platform on which Kamsa was seated, and seizing him by the hair, threw him down on the ground and killed him. Having consoled Kamsa's weeping wives he ordered a royal cremation for him, and refusing the kingdom offered him by Ugrasen, installed the latter on the throne and invited his banished relatives to return to Mathura.

The next episode is Krishna's fight with Jarasandha, emperor of Magadha, and Kalayavana. Jarasandha was the son-in-law of Kamsa. Enraged by Krishna's assassination of Kamsa, his son-in-law, Jarasandha is said to have invaded Mathura seventeen times and to have been every time repulsed by Krishna. Fearing, however, that an eighteenth invasion would be disastrous to the city, Krishna removed the Yadavas to Dwarka at the west end of Gujarat Peninsula. After the removal of the Yadavas from Mathura, the city was besieged by Kalayavana at the instigation of Jarasandha. While pursuing the unarmed Krishna, however, out of the city, the invader was burnt to ashes, by fire issuing from the eyes of king Muchakunda, who had

been sleeping in a mountain cave and whom he had awakened with a kick mistaking him for Krishna. Krishna defeated the army of Kalayavana but while flying to Dwaraka with the booty, he was overtaken by Jarasandha. He, however, evaded his enemy by climbing a hill and flying to Dwaraka after jumping down from it.

Krishna was now, for the first time, married. He married Rukmini, daughter of Bhishmaka, king of Vidarbha. Her father, at Jarasandha's advice, was making preparations to get her married to Sishupala, Krishna's cousin and king of Chedi. But Krishna carried her off on the day before the proposed marriage. The Bhagavata says she had fallen in love with Krishna and had addressed a love letter to him. This does not seem to be true. For Krishna did not remain a true and faithful husband of Rukmini. Rukmini was gradually followed by an enormously vast army of co-wives till the number of Krishna's consorts rose to sixteen thousand one hundred and eight. His children numbered one lakh and eighty-thousand. The chief of his wives were the well-known eight, Rukmini, Satyabhama, Jambavati, Kalindi, Mitrabinda, Satya, Bhadra, and Lakshmana. The remaining sixteen thousand and one hundred were married to him on the same day. They belonged originally to the harem of king Naraka of Pragjyotish whom Krishna defeated and killed at the invitation of Indra, whose mother's ear-rings had been carried away by Naraka. While paying a visit after the battle to Indra's heaven in company with Satyabhama, this lady took fancy to Indra's famous parijat tree. To oblige his wife, Krishna had to fight with the God whom he had just favoured. Indra, though the chief of the Vedic Gods, and though he was helped by the latter on this occasion was indeed no match for the 'Incarnation of the Supreme Being' and was forced to part with his favourite flower-tree, which was thus carried to Dwarka and planted there. The story of how he obtained his chief eight wives is very interesting. The story of how he got Rukmini is already told. Satyabhama was the daughter of Satyajit, a Yadava chief who gave her away in marriage to Krishna because he was afraid of him and wished to buy his favour. Jambavati was the daughter of Jambavna, a bear chief, against whom Krishna waged a long war to recover a previous gem he had taken away from a Yadava. Jambavana was defeated and presented his daughter to Krishna, as a peace-offering. Kalindi went through a series of austerities in order to get Krishna as her husband and her devotion was rewarded by the marriage she had sought. Mitrabinda was a cousin of Krishna and was carried off by him from the Svayamvara grounds. Satya was the daughter of Nagnajit, king of Ayodhya and was won by Krishna when he had achieved a brave feat of arms, namely, killing a number of

naughty bulls belonging to Nagnajit. Bhadra was another cousin of Krishna and was married by him in the usual way. Lakshmana was the daughter of Brihatsena, king of Madra. and was carried off by him from the Swayamavara grounds.

Krishna's part in Arjuna's marriage with Subhadra, sister of Balarama and Krishna's half sister is noteworthy. In the course of his travels Arjuna arrived at the holy place of Prabhasa, and was received by Krishna on the hill of Raivataka. There he was enamoured of Subhadra and asked Krishna how he could get her. Krishna advised him to carry her off as a brave Kshatriya without depending upon the chances of a Svayamvaram, the usual Kshatriya form of marriage. The Yadavas were at first enraged at this outrage, but when Krishna convinced them that Arjuna would be a very worthy husband for Subhadra, and that by carrying her off he had done nothing unworthy of a hero, they consented to the union. And how could they do otherwise ? Krishna did not simply argue like us, poor talkers. He, as we have already seen, had backed his precepts by his example.

It is interesting to note how Krishna disposed of Jarasandha and Sishupala who created trouble at the Rajasuya performed by Yudhisthira. Jarasandha had imprisoned a large number of kings and intended to sacrifice them to Rudra. Unless he was killed and the imprisoned princes released and given an opportunity to pay homage to Yudhisthira, the latter's claim as emperor could not be established. Krishna therefore proceeded with Bhima and Arjuna to Rajagriha, Jarasandha's capital, and challenged him to a single combat with anyone of them he might choose. Such a challenge could not be refused by a Kshatriya, and Jarasandha, at the anticipation of death at his opponent's hand, declared his son Sahadev as his heir apparent and chose Bhima as his opponent. The combat lasted thirteen days, and Jarasandha at length met with a painful death at his rival's hand. Having put Sahadev on his father's throne, and invited the released princes to attend Yudhisthira's Rajasuya, Krishna and his friends returned to Indraprastha.

In due course the Rajasuya came off. Of the various functions and duties connected with the ceremony, Krishna is said to have taken charge of washing the feet of the Brahmans. This is a sure indication of the comparative modernness of the Mahabharata, at any rate, of this story. For in ancient times, even when the supremacy of the Brahmans had been established, the Kshatriyas never paid them any servile honour. However when the sacrifice was over, the time came for Yudhisthira to make presents to the assembled princes, priests and other persons deserving honour. To whom must honour be paid first ?

Yudhisthira having asked Bhishma's opinion on the matter, the latter replied that Krishna was the person to be honoured first. Accordingly Sahadeva at Yudhishtira's command presented the Arghya, the mark of honour, to Krishna, and the latter accepted it. This upset Sishupala, who made a long speech, challenging Krishna's right to the honour and abusing the Pandavas for paying any honour and Krishna for accepting it. Bhishma made another speech narrating Krishna's exploits and achievements at length, and declaring his divinity. Sishupala rose again, rebutted Bhishma's arguments one after another, and grossly abused him. It is pointed out by Krishna's recent biographers, that of the charges brought against Krishna by Sishupala, there is no mention of his dealings with the Brindaban Gopis, a sure indication, according to them, that when the Mahabharatha was composed, the story of these dealings of Krishna, a story made so much of by the writers of the Puranas and the later poets, was not conceived. However, at the end of Sishupala's speech Bhishma, who saw that Yudhishtira was afraid lest Sishupala and his followers might obstruct the completion of the ceremony, said, addressing them that if they were resolved to die they might challenge the divine Krishna himself to fight. At this Sishupala challenged Krishna, who rose in response and narrated his opponent's numerous misdeeds. Then with the words, "At the request of his mother, my aunt, I have pardoned a hundred of Sishupala's offences. But I cannot pardon the insulting words he has spoken of me before the assembled princes : I kill him before you all". He threw his chakra at him and cut off his head.

Actions of Krishna during the Mahabharata War may now be reviewed. The following are some of them :

1. When Satyaki, Krishna's friend, was hard pressed by Bhurisrava, son of Somadatta, Krishna induced Arjuna to cut off his arms, and thereby made it easy for Satyaki to kill him.

2. When Abhimanyu was unfairly surrounded and killed by seven Kaurava warriors, Arjuna vowed the death of the ring leader, Jayadratha, next day before sunset, or, failing that his own death by entering into fire. When the Sun was about to set, and Jayadratha remained unslain, Krishna miraculously hid the Sun, on which Jayadratha, having come out Krishna uncovered the Sun, and Arjuna killed Jayadratha when he was unaware.

3. Despairing of Drona being ever killed by fair means Krishna advised the Pandavas to kill him unfairly. If he could be made to cast down his arms, he could, Krishna said, be killed easily. This could be done if he was told that his son, Asvathama was dead. Bhima tried the suggested device. He killed an elephant named after

Drona's son and told him that Asvathama was killed. The warrior was somewhat depressed by the news, but did not quite believe it. At this juncture he was hard pressed by a number of sages to cease fighting and prepare himself for heaven with meditations worthy of a Brahmana. This checked the hero still more and he applied to the truthful Yudhisthira for correct information about his son. Finding Yudhisthira unwilling to tell a lie, Krishna overcame his reluctance by a long exhortation, in the course of which he announced his ethics of untruth in the following edifying text from Vasishtha's Smriti.

"In marriage, in amorous dealings, when one's life is in danger, when the whole of one's possession is going to be lost, and when a Brahman's interest is at stake, untruth should be told. The wise have said that speaking untruth on these five occasions is not a sin." Yudhisthir's scruples were stifled, and he said to his preceptor, "Yes, Asvathama is killed" adding in a low voice, "that is, an elephant" which last words, however were not heard by Dron. His depression was complete, and on hearing some bitterly reproachful words from Bhima, he gave up his arms, and while sitting in a meditative posture, was killed by Dhristhadyumna.

4. When Bhima was unsuccessfully fighting with Duryodhana by the side of the Dvaipayana Lake Krishna reminded him through Arjuna that he had vowed the breaking of his opponent's thighs. Now striking a rival below the navel was unfair, but as Duryodhana could not be killed except by such an unfair means, Krishna advised Bhima to adopt the same and Bhima did."

The death of Krishna throws a flood of light on his morals. Krishna died as the Ruler of Dwaraka. What was this Dwaraka like and what sort of death awaited him ?

In founding his city of Dwaraka he had taken care to settle thousands of 'unfortunates' there. As the Harivamsa said : 'O, hero having conquerred the abodes of the Daityas (giants) with the help of brave Yadus, the Lord settled thousands of public women in Dwaraka". Dancing, singing and drinking by men and women married and prostitutes filled the city of Dwaraka. We get a description of a seatrip in which these women formed a principal source of enjoyment. Excited by their singing and dancing, the brothers Krishna and Balarama joined in the dancing with their wives. They were followed by the other Yadava chiefs and by Arjuna and Narada. Then a fresh excitement was sought. Men and women all fell into the sea and at Krishna's suggestion, the gentlemen began a jalakrida water sport, with the ladies, Krishna leading one party, and Balarama another,

while the courtesans added to the amusement by their music. This was followed by eating and drinking and this again by a special musical performance in which the leaders themselves exhibited their respective skill in handling various musical instruments. It will thus be seen what a jolly people these Yadavas were, and with what contempt they would have treated the objections urged nowadays by the Brahmans and such other purists against nautch parties and the native theatres. It was in one of these revels—a drunken revel—that the Yadavas were destroyed. They, it is said, had incurred the displeasure of a number of sages by a childish trick played on the latter by some of their boys. These boys disguised Samba, one of Krishna's sons, as a woman with child, tying an iron pestle below his navel, and asked the sages to say what child the 'woman' would give birth to. The enraged sage said 'she' would produce an iron pestle which would be the ruin of the Yadavas. Fearing the worst consequences from this curse, the boys took the pestle to the sea-side and rubbed it away. But its particles came out in the form of *erakas,* a kind of reeds and its last remaining bit, which had been thrown into the sea, was afterwards recovered and used by a hunter as the point of an arrow; Now it was with these erakas that the Yadavas killed themselves. They had gone in large parties to the holy place of Prabhasa. They indulged in drinking there and this proved their ruin. The evils of drinking there had been found out at length by Krishna and some other Yadava leaders, and it was prohibited on pain of death by a public notification. But the prohibition had no effect. The drunken Yadavas at first quarrelled and then began to fight and kill one another. When some of Krishna's own sons were killed he himself joined in the fight and killed a large number of his own people. He then went in search of Balarama. He found him in meditative posture and saw his spirit passing out of his body in the form of a large serpent i.e., Sesha Naga, the divine snake whom he had incarnated. Krishna now felt that it was time for him also to pass away. He then bade farewell to his father and his wives, telling them that he had sent for Arjuna, who would take charge of them. Then he seated himself under a tree, hidden by its leafy and outstretching branches, and composed his mind in meditation. While thus sitting, a hunter named Jara mistook him for a deer and hit him with an arrow, one pointed with the last remaining bit of the fatal pestle. Discovering his mistake, the man fell at Krishna's feet and was pardoned and flew away to heaven, illumining all sides by its dazzling light. Arjuna came and proceeded towards Hastinapur with the surviving Yadavas—men and women. But his good genius having left him he had lost the power of his hitherto mighty arm and his

unrivalled skill as an archer. A number of Ahiras, armed only with lathis, attacked his party and carried off many of the women, and he reached Hastinapur only with a small remnant. After Arjuna's departure the sea engulfed Dwaraka, and nothing was left to speak of the Yadavas, their glories, their domestic broils and their revels.

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